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A newly introduced bill in the U.S. House of Representatives would limit the ability of pedophiles to communicate with children on Internet chat rooms in libraries and schools.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-10th, has proposed the Deleting Online Predators Act of 2007, which is similar to a bill that passed the House overwhelmingly in 2006 but stalled in the Senate.

At a town hall meeting Saturday at the Mount Prospect Public Library, Kirk reviewed his bill, which has support from local law enforcement. The meeting included comments from investigators who have special training in arresting adults who meet children online with the intention of scheduling face-to-face meetings and sexually exploiting them.

"We estimate there are 50,000 sexual predators online in Illinois. This problem reflects a generational gap because these threats were not part of my parents' life or my generation," Kirk said. "This legislative act empowers parents to eliminate predators from a child's computer."

Kirk's proposal would amend the Communications Act of 1934 to enforce the monitoring of minors' online activities in schools and use protective technology to restrict Internet pictures that are obscene or pornographic. The act also would apply to libraries, but adds a clause that parents must be notified of their children using social networking Web sites or chat rooms.

In addition, the Federal Trade Commission could issue consumer alerts on the dangers of Internet child predators and establish a resource Web site to inform parents and school officials.

Deerfield Library Board member David Wolff said he doesn't necessarily oppose the bill, but wonders if it isn't attempting to shift the burden of parenting off of parents.

"I wonder if they are not relinquishing the responsibility of parents to know what their children are doing and to teach them discipline and self-discipline, and to teach them right from wrong," Wolff said.

Law enforcement officials are squarely behind the bill.

Mount Prospect police Detective Robert Riordan said he often conversed on chat rooms as if he were a 14-year-old girl online, attempting to make contact with adults seeking relationships with minors. In one case, he said, a 21-year-old Mount Prospect resident on MySpace.com had communication with 300 young females.

"I try to contact these girls and find out what I can. One 16-year-old girl had sex with an adult in Elgin, and we arrested him for that and for child pornography. He's looking at doing seven to 10 years in prison," Riordan said.

Dan Ferraro, deputy chief of investigations for the Illinois Attorney General's Office, said convicted child sex predators have learned from other offenders in prison how to avoid future arrests. He also said some online predators have obtained Internet Protocol numbers -- computer addresses -- of chat room users to locate where they live through geo-satellite Web sites, such as geolocation.com and earth.google.com.

"One offender said online he lived in the United Kingdom. He really lived three miles away within Bloomingdale, Ill.," Ferraro said.

According to Stop Child Predators, a Washington, D.C.-based group of policymakers and community leaders, jailed sex offenders of minors are four times more likely to repeat their violations than those convicted of other crimes.

Often, they only serve four years of seven-year sentences, said Stacie D. Rumenap, executive director of Stop Child Predators.

"The system for watching these people once out of prison is overwhelmed. We believe about 100,000 have become lost statistics. They move around and don't register with local law enforcement," Rumenap said.

"Congress must catch up to this problem," Kirk said.